

Immunization Registry Progress in Texas

Immunization Coverage in Texas

According to National Immunization Survey (NIS) data for July 1998 to June 1999, the percentage of children 19 to 35 months of age residing in Texas who were up-to-date with 4 doses of diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, 3 doses of poliomyelitis, and 1 dose of measles, mumps, rubella vaccine was 74%. In the Counties of Dallas, El Paso, and Bexar and the City of Houston the coverage rates were 77, 81, 73, and 57%, respectively. State surveys show that over 80% of children receive their first doses, but do not return to finish the necessary series.

Facts about Texas' Immunization Registry, Imm Trac

- Imm Trac collects and manages immunization data for the entire state of Texas.
- The targeted age group for Imm Trac is all children from birth through age 18.
- Currently, entities which link with the registry include:
 - Vital Records Department;
 - Newborn Screening Program;
 - Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program;
 - Medicaid Management Information system;
 - Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program;
 - Public Health Clinic Patient Management/Billing System; and
 - Other Registries.
- As of June 21, 1999:
 - 51% of children less than 6-years old were enrolled in the registry; and
 - 25% of all providers were enrolled in the registry.

Other registry plans, accomplishments, and successes

- In 1996, Imm Trac won the Computerworld Smithsonian Award for best use of technology in Medicine award. Information about ImmTrac is preserved in the Smithsonian Institutions Permanent Research Collection on Information Technology in Washington, DC.
- Currently, Imm Trac contains immunization histories for approximately 3.7 million Texas children. The application is now being distributed to public and private physicians for use in clinics and practices, but is still in the early stages of implementation.

Some challenges and barriers affecting registry progress

- Several challenges are present in Texas. The recruitment of private physicians has been a challenge, as they are concerned about the added work load to their already busy offices. Texas has very specific legislation (HB3054) requiring all physicians to report immunizations to the registry and for the data to be captured from insurance company billing systems. The same legislation prohibits Imm Trac from sharing the data collected with the insurance companies for HEDIS reports. Therefore, there is little incentive for insurance companies to comply with or participate in the reporting of immunizations to Imm Trac.
- An active group of concerned parents, who are vocal about privacy and vaccine safety

issues, have lobbied for and received changes that have made the operation of the registry restrictive. Imm Trac was first designed to be an opt-out system, in which parents notify TDH if they do not want their child's information to be included in the registry. Based on public comment, Imm Trac was changed to only allow records with consent to be added. Parental consent can be gained at the time of birth, but is also renewed at each clinic visit.

Current political or legislative factors affecting registry activity

The Texas Medical Association supports the registry, but would like to implement a better way for physicians, the Texas Department of Health, insurance companies and other providers to interface with, report to, and access the registry information. A stakeholders meeting of physicians, a legislative coalition member, a person who is very active at the state and national level concerning immunization registries, and health maintenance organizations met in November 1999 to discuss the Texas immunization registry. Most of the attendees favored a more efficient, workable registry with decreased restrictions while still effective in protecting immunization records and patient rights.

Political will is unknown at this time, but the 77th Texas Legislature will convene in January of 2001.

Current registry funding

Imm Trac is currently funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the state of Texas. The Texas Department of Health has a commitment to fund the registry until the application is stable and widely used. TDH will attempt to seek supplemental funding when available and will begin discussions with Medicaid to gain financial support.

Helpful immunization and immunization registry contacts in Texas

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Other Resources:

- Texas Department of Health, Immunization Division – Robert Crider, Director
- Dallas Area Infant Immunization Coalition
- Shots Across Texas-Panhandle Coalition
- San Antonio Metro Immunization Registry – Mark Ritter
- Texas Children's Hospital for Harris County Immunization Registry – Dr. Celine Hanson
- Texas Medical Association – Gayle Harris
- Texas Pediatric Society

Texas Department of Health Immunization Page and Immunization Registry:
www.tdh.state.tx.us/immunize/immpage1.htm

Concerned Parents Group P.R.O.V.E.:
<http://home.swbell.net/prove>